

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims to read as follows.

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A supporting mechanism for movably supporting a member to be supported along a supporting shaft, comprising:

a plurality of supporting members provided on the member to be supported, each of said supporting members contacting with the supporting shaft on at least two contact points so as to be movable on the supporting shaft, the at least two contact points being apart from each other; and

a pressing device for pressing the plurality of supporting members against the supporting shaft so that the contact points of each supporting member simultaneously come into contact with the supporting shaft, wherein

each of said supporting members is opened in a radius direction of the supporting shaft, enabling the supporting shaft to shift in the radius direction thereof to be received in the supporting member.

Claim 2 (Original): The supporting mechanism of claim 1, wherein the supporting member has two contact surfaces, which include the contact points, respectively and are in parallel with the supporting shaft, and

the pressing device comes into contact with the supporting shaft at a position existing between the supporting members in a parallel direction with the supporting shaft to press the supporting shaft.

Claim 3 (Original): The supporting mechanism of claim 1, wherein the supporting shaft has an outer circumferential surface on which a threaded portion is formed to move the member to be supported, and

the pressing device is fixed to the member to be supported and includes a rack gear engaging with the threaded portion so as to move the member along the supporting shaft.

Claim 4 (Original): The supporting mechanism of claim 2, wherein the supporting shaft has an outer circumferential surface on which a threaded portion is formed to move the member to be supported, and

the pressing device is fixed to the member to be supported and includes a rack gear engaging with the threaded portion so as to move the member along the supporting shaft.

Claims 5-6 (Canceled).

Claim 7 (Currently Amended): The supporting mechanism of claim ~~1~~ 3, wherein the at least two contact points are apart from each other in a circumferential direction of the supporting shaft.

Claim 8 (Currently Amended): A feeding unit comprising:

(a) a supporting mechanism for movably supporting a member to be supported along a supporting shaft, comprising:

a plurality of supporting members provided on the member, each of said supporting members contacting with the supporting shaft on at least two contact points so as to be movable

on the supporting shaft, the at least two contact points being apart from each other, said supporting shaft having an outer circumferential surface on which a threaded portion is formed to move the member to be supported; and

a pressing device for pressing the plurality of supporting members against the supporting shaft so that the contact points of each supporting member simultaneously come into contact with the supporting shaft and the plurality of supporting members simultaneously come into contact with the supporting shaft, said pressing device being fixed to the member to be supported and includes a rack gear engaging with the threaded portion so as to move the member along the supporting shaft; and

(b) a rotation device for rotating the threaded portion engaging with the rack gear, thereby moving the member to be supported along the supporting shaft, wherein

each of said supporting members is opened in a radius direction of the supporting shaft, enabling the supporting shaft to shift in the radius direction thereof to be received in the supporting member.

Claim 9 (Original): The feeding unit of claim 8, wherein the supporting member has two contact surfaces, which include the contact points, respectively and are in parallel with the supporting shaft, and

the pressing device comes into contact with the supporting shaft at a position existing between the supporting members in a parallel direction with the supporting shaft to press the supporting shaft.

Claim 10 (Original): The supporting mechanism of claim 8, wherein the at least two contact points are apart from each other in a circumferential direction of the supporting shaft.

Claims 11-16 (Canceled).